

i. The actual categories

This outline has three subtopics:

- 1) Armor-like diligence
- 2) Diligence of gathering virtue
- 3) Diligence of working for the welfare of sentient beings

1) Armor-like diligence

Armor-like diligence is a type of motivating force that provides the armor against feeling lazy, weary and disheartened. It serves as a preparation for any Buddhist practice, for it imparts us with courage and determination to continue on the spiritual path.

Buddhist practice constitutes an internal battle with our attachment, anger, arrogance, etc. induced by the grasping at the self and its resultant self-cherishing attitude. Since we are up against an extremely mighty, influential, and resistant inner enemy we require a strong armor.

The **Lam Rim Chenmo** describes armor-like diligence as a preliminary motivation thinking, for instance, "For a trillion sets of three countless great eons each composed of days as long as a thousand great eons, I shall not relinquish my practice of diligence. For the sake of relieving the suffering of a single sentient being, I would rejoice at remaining only as a hell-being until I attain Buddhahood. As I exert myself in this manner for the sake of complete enlightenment, what need is there to mention my diligence over a shorter period or the in face of lesser suffering?"

An eon (Sanskrit: *kalpa*) is an Indian measure of time. There are several explanations of the types of eons and their duration. In general, four types of eons are described:

- a) A regular eon – a regular eon is approximately 16 million years long
- b) A small eon – a small eon is 1000 regular eons, or 16 billion years
- c) A medium eon – a medium eon is 320 billion years, the equivalent of 20 small eons
- d) A great eon – a great eon is 4 medium eons, or 1.28 trillion years.

Many of the sutric scriptures explain that Bodhisattvas have to accumulate merit for three *countless great eons* in order to attain enlightenment.

Here 'countless' does not literally mean incalculable but it is the name of a number. In the Indian system, ten to the sixtieth power (i.e. 10,000,000,000,000,000 -- sixteen zeros) is called 'countless'.

However, whether it takes Bodhisattvas this long to attain enlightenment is not important. The point is that they are committed to strive towards becoming a Buddha regardless of how long it takes. Having great love and compassion for all sentient beings Bodhisattvas do not waver in the face of great hardships and difficulties but transform them into their practice and bear them with ease.

Aryasura says in the **Compendium of Perfections (Paramita-Samasa)**:

*In as many eons as there are drops of water in the ocean,
Eons in which years are composed
Of long, drawn out days and nights equal in duration
Even to the temporal limits of Samsara,

You produce the spirit of supreme enlightenment once.
Though you likewise have to accomplish every other collection,
You do not become disheartened because of your compassion,
And undiscouraged you achieve sublime enlightenment.

To generate this immeasurable steadfast armor
While disregarding your suffering in cyclic existence
Is declared the first proper undertaking
For the disciplined hero possessed of compassion.*

Even though Aryasura's quote talks of the duration that is equal to the temporal limits of Samsara, this does not literally mean that Samsara has a temporal limit. It rather refers to the time-span from beginninglessness to the end of Samsara which is beyond calculation. If such a time-span had a limit imagine that a single day lasts as long as that period. During many of these incredibly long days, Mahayana practitioners may be able to generate uncontrived Bodhicitta merely once.

Nonetheless, due to their diligence they do not lose their courage and determination. Thus, armor-like diligence is particularly important in the beginning since it is the motivating force that enables practitioners to persevere despite the difficulties that lie ahead.

2) *Diligence of gathering virtue*

Just as warriors, after having prepared their armor, gather up their weapons, likewise, after having generated the armor that motivates us to engage in practice, we need to actually engage in practice in order to be able to create the causes and conditions for becoming a Buddha.

The diligence of virtue refers to the joyous effort that is enthusiastic about accumulating virtue, such as engaging in the practice of the ten virtues, selflessness, love, compassion, the six perfections, and so forth.

3) *Diligence of working for the welfare of sentient beings*

Due to the wide variety of sentient beings there are numerous different ways of benefitting them. Based on sentient beings' needs, predispositions, and mental levels the different ways of benefitting them can be condensed into eleven types of activities. Therefore, Lama Tsongkhapa says that the diligence of working for the welfare of sentient beings refers to properly applying the practice of these eleven types of activities for others' welfare.

The eleven types of activities are:

1. Activities directed toward sentient beings who need immediate and direct help
2. Activities directed toward sentient beings who do not know how to achieve what they desire
3. Activities directed toward sentient beings who need material or spiritual assistance
4. Activities directed toward sentient beings who experience fear
5. Activities directed toward sentient beings who are miserable
6. Activities directed toward sentient beings who are in poverty
7. Activities directed toward sentient beings who need someplace to stay while traveling
8. Activities directed toward sentient beings who want friends or agreeable companions
9. Activities directed toward sentient beings who desire to enter the practice that leads to Nirvana or enlightenment
10. Activities directed toward sentient beings who are on the wrong path and need help to reverse direction
11. Activities directed toward sentient beings who need extraordinary, miraculous help.

ii. The method for cultivating diligence

Diligence is an extremely important mental factor as it produces, maintains, and increases the accumulation of merit and wisdom. Therefore, we need to become familiar with the methods for cultivating such diligence.

Lama Tsongkhapa says that he will base his following explanations on Shantideva's *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds (Bodhisattvacharyāvatāra)* since it is complete as well as easy to understand and to sustain in practice.

The method for cultivating diligence has four subtopics:

- a. Eliminating unfavorable conditions that prevent diligence
- b. Gathering the forces of favorable conditions
- c. Based on the elimination of unfavorable conditions and the accumulation of favorable conditions, being intent on diligence
- d. How to use diligence to make the mind and body serviceable

a. Eliminating unfavorable conditions that prevent diligence

Eliminating unfavorable conditions that prevent diligence consists of two parts:

- I. Identifying factors incompatible with diligence
- II. Employing the methods to eliminate the incompatible factors

